

9 November 1949

Major General Kenneth F. Cramer
Chief, National Guard Bureau
Department of the Army
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear General Cramer:

Before your appointment as Chief of the National Guard Bureau and after an allotment of troops was offered to the State in 1946, one of the first acts of my tour of duty as the Adjutant General of this State was to request an additional allotment of units to be organized with colored troops. This request was made and granted in the fall of 1946 which included a Transportation Truck Battalion with a Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, Medical Detachment and two Truck Companies. At first, we were delayed in the organization because we lacked sufficient armory space in Charleston or Welch where we plan to organize these units. We have now made temporary arrangements so we can organize the battalion headquarters and one company in Charleston with the other company in Welch although permanent housing in new armories will be necessary.

My Governor, the Honorable Okey L. Patteson, received a committee of Negro businessmen who opposed what they called relegation of the Negro to a service-type organization. This recent committee opposition is a part of a continuous voice of disapproval since the original allocation of the Truck Battalion and part of the reason for delay in its organization. I have tried to point out to the committee of Negro representatives that the Transportation Truck Battalion is ~~considered~~ ^{considered} comparable to infantry troops and would receive the same type basic training in addition to specialized training, but have been unable to convince them that they are not relegated to a labor-type unit.

Approximately six per cent of our population is Negro and it has always been my contention that they should be properly represented in the National Guard. In order that we might satisfy their demands, I would like to have combat-type units in lieu of the Truck Battalion if possible or an additional combat-type company, which could be attached to the Truck Battalion. It would be preferable if we could have an infantry

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Battalion in lieu of the Truck Battalion and in this way we could convert the Truck Battalion, which is now being organized, to the Infantry or other combat-type battalion.

You have always been sympathetic in considering my problems and I urge you to give this your early attention in order that I might inform the Governor of the type unit which you have to offer or can get from the Department of the Army. I do not believe they would be satisfied with military police units which I understand are available.

A new allocation as requested above seems to be the best answer since every unit allotted the State has been organized with exception of the Truck Battalion. As a guide to you, I am enclosing a statement of policy which I gave to the Negro committee on 7 May 1948 concerning utilization of Negro troops.

With highest personal regards and best wishes, I am

Most sincerely yours,

Charles R. Fox
Brigadier General
The Adjutant General

CRV:fa

1 Encl.

cc: Gov. Orin L. Patterson

Statement of Policy with Reference to Negro Troops in West Virginia National Guard

1. The National Guard is organized according to customs and procedures established by the Department of National Defense. The Department of the Army has allocated approximately 10 per cent of its strength to negro units based on the national population ratio. We are required to organize the West Virginia National Guard according to laws and regulations governing the Army of the United States and military laws and customs of the State. The National Guard is an integral part of the Nation's security forces.

2. The population of this State is composed of about 6 per cent negro and 94 per cent white. Therefore, where feasible, the strength of the National Guard should include about 6 per cent negro troops. The limiting factors at the present time are the units available which are allotted by the National Guard Bureau, centers of negro population, and availability of armories.

3. Realizing the importance of utilizing negro troops, and giving our negroes this equal opportunity to support our plan of National Defense, a request was made to the National Guard Bureau for the allocation of negro units. The Bureau offered a Transportation Truck Battalion, and this was readily accepted, because our National Guard was very much in need of a unit of this type. It is interesting to note that Maryland has the same negro unit allocation, and has had great success with it, and the Adjutant General reports high interest and disciplinary unit esprit in the negro Transportation Battalion.

4. It is realized by all that the break-down of racial prejudice and barriers of that nature, comes only through the years, and cannot always be accomplished overnight. The desire in West Virginia to establish a negro unit in our National Guard could be a long step forward

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in specifying the attitude of our citizens concerning this most important matter. After the establishment of separate units of the different branches of service, it is highly probable that ultimate integration can follow, although that is something, which of course, must be left to the future.

5. The plan of this office is to organize the Transportation Truck Battalion as a separate negro unit, with the objective of converting it, in whole or in part, to a combat type unit, when availability of such units and other conditions are favorable. While negro enlistments are presently limited to the Transportation Battalion, it is planned to incorporate negro units into larger white units, so that our National Guardsmen can all work together for the common good.

6. Listed below are the elements of the plan of this office to be executed in the order named. It is desired that the following be clearly regarded as elements which will require much time, patience, understanding and exemplary service by both negro and white troops. It is believed that the following elements constitute a logical plan:

a. Organize separate colored units as now planned.

b. After the above has been accomplished, organize colored units within larger white units such as a colored company in a white battalion.

c. The next logical step is the organization of colored platoons within white companies, batteries or similar units. It is pointed out that this is the first time that negro and white troops could be under one unit commander, using common armory facilities.

6. We then approach the integration of negro troops as individuals into white units. Even when this is accomplished, it is believed advisable that a percentage division of vacancies between colored and white personnel be made. For example, if our population includes only 6 per cent negroes, negro troops should be limited to about 6 per cent of the troop strength.

7. The decisions made in this statement of policy are not the result of prejudice against any color. The statements are the result of conferences, staff studies and detailed estimates of the situation. This office, the Governor and State Government can only work for a reasonable solution. The limiting factor is that nothing must be done that would decrease the efficiency of the National Guard. The success in completing the organization of presently allotted units will materially effect the expeditious accomplishment of successive steps as outlined in Paragraph 6.

Alderson, W. Va.
November 8, 1949

Dr. Calvin Price, Editor
Pocahontas Times
Marlington, W. Va.

Dear Dr. Price:

I have come upon information today of the action of some of our Republican Friends, Negroes, who are securing ammunition for the 1950 election. They have under way a plan with the Adjutant General to organize a Trucking Battalion, two companies and a headquarters staff. One trucking company to be stationed at Charleston, the other at Welch, West Virginia. The American Legion has gone on record opposing the idea of placing our boys in more or less a service outfit, in fact the resolution as was carried through the American Legion Convention, asked that our boys be taken into various branches of the services of the guards. These gentlemen of my race, Republican Politicians, would be very happy to have the trucking company organized, since it is objectionable, not only to the Negroes of our State, but to the white Legionaries, as well, judging from the resolution that passed in the convention.

I was informed that the Charleston Company is to be activated 16. One of the gentlemen that is behind the movement, admitted in a conversation today that he did not know whether the proposition he is sponsoring is the right thing to do.

Some days ago a delegation of eleven representative members of the American Legion was in conference with Governor Patten protesting the proposed organization. The Chairman, Daniel W. Ambrose, has not as yet, heard from the Governor, and personally, I do not believe that the Governor knows that this organization is to be activated so soon.

Whatever you feel that you can do in this case will be much appreciated by me and all the well thinking Negroes in the State. I will certainly be glad to have you discuss this matter with Senator Fred Allen and get him to use his good office to prevent the activation so soon.

With every good wish to you and yours, I am Sir,

Sincerely yours,

James E. Banks
James E. Banks